DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 265 RC 006 574

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TITLE The Two-Step Flow of Communications in Rural India.
PUB DATE Aug 72
NOTE 10p.; Paper prepared for Third World Congress of Rural Sociology (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, August 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Communications; *Community Leaders; Education; *Mass Media; *Oral Communication; *Rural Areas; Social Change
IDENTIFIERS *India

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to delineate the major channels of communication in 3 village communities in northern India. It was hypothesized that mass media would be an important source of information for the community leaders who would disseminate the information through personal contacts to other members of the community. It was further hypothesized that the 2-step flow of communication would be stronger in remote and isolated rural communities than in those located near urban centers. The data were collected from 3 villages at varying distances from urban centers. The sample consisted of 272 cultivators randomly selected from the 3 villages and community leaders identified by the cultivators. Major conclusions were that the mass media were an important source of communication for community leaders and educated persons; that the cultivators relied heavily on the leaders for information regarding innovation; and that the 2-step flow of communication was more significant in the remote village as compared to villages closer to urban centers. (PS)

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THE TWO-STEP FLOW OF COMMUNICATIONS IN RURAL INDIA

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Paper prepared for presentation at the Third World Congress of Rural Sociology, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, U.S.A., August, 1972.

RC006574

Research Problem

Communication is the essence of social reality. All social relationships are actualized only through the process of communication. In the context of a changing social milieu this process assumes a still greater significance. Social change implies the replacement of some existing social, or cultural, elements by some new ones. Such a replacement of elements necessitates efficient channels of communication so that the new attributes can be easily and quickly siphoned into the indigenous social organization. However, the efficiency of different channels of communication varies from one social field to another. Katz and Lazarsfeld[1] have, for example, stressed that mass media like radio, newspapers, magazines, and films do not play a significant role in the communication net work of traditional rural communities. It is maintained by these writers that personal channels of communication are of greater significance in such communities. Several studies have confirmed, directly or indirectly, that Katz and Lazarsfeld's prediction holds good in the Indian villages.[2] However, there has been a need for empirical studies that could spell out types and channels of communication that work in different situational contexts in the village India.

The study on which the present paper is based was conducted to delineate in a limited way the major channels of communication in three village communities in Northern India. We assumed that a two-step flow of communication[3] existed in these communities. It was hypothesized, therefore, that mass media would be an important source of information for the community leaders[4],

who in turn should disseminate that information through personal contacts to other members of the community. In addition, the two-step flow of communication was assumed to be stronger in remote and isolated rural communities as compared to those located near urban centers. It was also hypothesized that education would be a significant factor affecting the level of mass-media usage among rural people--both leaders and masses.

Research Methods Used

The data for the study were collected during Summer and Fall, 1970 from three villages in the Panjab state. The major criterion used in selecting the villages was their relative distance from cities or towns. In the present paper these villages are designated as A, B, and C in order of increasing distance from urban centers. Thus, while village A was located in close proximity of a major city, village B was a little removed from the vicinity of any town, and village C was relatively remote and isolated.

The universe of inquiry consisted of two types of respondents, namely: (1) 272 cultivators randomly selected from the three villages; and (2) community leaders, who were identified by the cultivators (first type of respondents) through reputational criteria.

The cultivators were selected through stratified sampling procedure. The stratifying variable was education. Separate lists of educated and uneducated cultivators from the three villages were prepared. It was decided to interview all the educated persons because of their small number and to draw a systematic sample from the lists of uneducated persons.

Leaders in the three communities were identified with the help of sociometric technique. The respondents were asked to mention five important leaders of their respective village communities. The five choices given by

them were given weights, so that the first choice received a weight of five, second a weight of four, third a weight of three, fourth a weight of two, and fifth a weight of one. Based on these weighted scores persons were ranked as leaders in order of popularity. An arbitrary limit had to be fixed for the identification of leaders and only those persons were included in this list who had received choices from at least 50 percent of the respondents. In this way 19 leaders were selected from the three village communities.

The respondents were interviewed personally by the senior author. A questionnaire was used consisting of structured as well as open-ended questions concerning (1) degree of exposure of respondents to mass media, (2) sources of information used for adoption of innovation, and (3) socio-economic characteristics of respondents.

Exposure of Leaders and Non-Leaders to Mass Media

The different means of mass media with reference to which the exposure was measured included radio, newspapers, magazines, and documentary films. Those persons who utilized these media were considered as being exposed to them, and those who did not make use of these media at all were taken as unexposed. The analysis regarding the exposure to various means of mass media in the case of leaders and non-leaders from the three villages under study is presented in Table 1. Data in the table show that the association between the variables of leadership and exposure to mass media was more significant in the case of village C, which was a remote village, as compared to the other two villages, which were in closer contacts of urban areas. This finding supports our hypothesis that a greater number of persons would

Table 1: The Degree of Exposure of Leaders and Non-Leaders from the Three Villages to Various Means of Mass Media

Means of Mass Media	Village A		Village B		Village C	
	Direction of Relationship	Chi-Square (df = 1)	Direction of Relationship	Chi-Square (df = 1)	Direction of Relationship	Chi Square (df = 1)
1. Radio	Greater number of leaders were exposed as compared to non-leaders	1.377	Greater number of leaders were exposed as compared to non-leaders	2.140	Greater number of leaders were exposed as compared to non-leaders	4.476*
2. Newspapers	Same as above	4.601*	Same as above	3.371	Same as above	6.015*
3. Magazines	Same as above	2.127	Same as above	5.568*	Same as above	6.117*
4. Documentary Films	Same as above	1.377	Same as above	2.119	Same as above	3.849*

*$P < .05$

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Leaders and Non-Leaders According to Their First Source of Information Regarding Fertilizers

Source of Information	Village A*		Village B**		Village C***	
	Leaders	Non-Leaders	Leaders	Non-Leaders	Leaders	Non-Leaders
1. Mass Media	66.7	19.1	57.1	9.4	50.0	6.5
2. Village Leaders	-	44.7	-	53.1	-	71.0
3. Extension Agency	33.3	29.8	42.9	31.3	50.0	16.1
4. Others	-	6.4	-	6.2	-	6.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Chi-Square= 6.04; df= 3; Theta= .158; $P > .05$
**Chi-Square= 8.31; df= 3; Theta= .283; $P < .05$
***Chi-Square=10.62; df= 3; Theta= .318; $P < .02$

likely to be exposed to mass media in the case of villages which were in close proximity of towns as compared to the persons of remote villages where only educated and key persons might be exposed to them.

Sources of Information and Advice Used for Adoption of Innovation

The respondents were further asked to mention their first source of information regarding chemical fertilizers. The analysis regarding this aspect was done in relation to the leaders and non-leaders of the three village communities and is shown in Table 2. Data in the table clearly show that a greater number of leaders than non-leaders mentioned different means of mass media as their first source of information. The leaders were then mentioned by a significant number of non-leaders as their first source of information.

From the data on three villages it may be observed that difference between leaders and non-leaders was highly significant in village C in terms of their usage of various sources of information. Thus, while the leaders in that village relied exclusively on impersonal sources of information such as mass media and extension agency, the non-leaders heavily depended on the leaders alone. This shows that the two-step flow of communications was more evident in the remote and isolated village C as compared to the other two villages.

Education and Source of Information

The analysis with regard to the educational background of the cultivators and their first source of information regarding chemical fertilizers revealed

that a greater number of educated persons mentioned mass media as a source of information as compared to the illiterate persons. The results of chi-square test in this respect are given in Table 3. Data in the table substantiated the hypothesis that education was an important variable affecting the use of mass media as a source of information.

Table 3: Relationship Between Educational Background of Respondents and Their First Source of Information Regarding Fertilizers

Villages	Direction of Relationship	Chi-Square (df=1)	P
A	A greater number of educated persons mentioned mass media as the first source of information as compared to illiterates.	8.761	$< .01$
B	Same as above	3.978	$< .05$
C	Same as above	6.427	$< .02$

Conclusion

The data given above regarding the patterns of communication in three Indian villages amply demonstrate that mass media were an important source of communication for community leaders and educated persons.

The same was not true of ordinary cultivators who heavily depended on the leaders for information regarding innovation. The two-step flow of communication was even more significant in the remote village as compared to villages closer to urban centers. The findings of this paper may be of

some help in formulating strategies for the flow of information regarding an innovation from the research laboratories to the common farmers in traditional rural communities, especially those which are relatively isolated from urban influence.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955).

2. Problems of inadequate usage of mass communication methods in India's community development program have been pointed out by several writers. See, for example, S.C. Dube, India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958); and Carl C. Taylor et. al., India's Roots of Democracy: A Sociological Analysis of Rural India's Experience in Planned Development Since Independence (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1967).

3. Katz and Lazarsfeld's study provided the theoretical model to the present study. See Katz and Lazarsfeld, op. cit. pp. 309-320.

4. This is in line with the innovation-diffusion research which shows that the innovators and early adopters use more impersonal sources of information while the late adopters and laggards use personal sources of information to a much greater extent. See Joe M. Bohlen, "The Adoption and Diffusion of Ideas in Agriculture," pp. 265-287 in James H. Copp (ed.), Our Changing Rural Society: Perspectives and Trends (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1964).

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